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ABSTRACT

Co-ordination and co-operation of libraries require a degree of centralization. On a nation-wide scale the one library which is best equipped to perform such centralized functions will be the national library, which has the richest collections and reference apparatus, adequate financial support and trained staff. The national library should be viewed not separately but in interrelationship with other libraries of the country, within their general framework. Considering the national library as a systems object implies that its typological functions are correlated and interdependent. The following categorization of typological functions is suggested: (1) a state repository of publications, (2) a major public library in the country, (3) an information and bibliographic center, (4) a methodological guidance center and (5) a co-ordination center. These five functions determine the nature and scope of collections, the pattern of their use and the role of the national library in the organization of library service within a country. The Lenin Library operates three kinds of literature service: (1) reading room service, (2) interlibrary loan service and (3) reproduction of library materials in photocopy and microcopy form. (NH)

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THE NATIONAL LIBRARY AND THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE
(Some Problems of Future Development of National Libraries)

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The national library, its role and position within the general system of library service and prospects for its further development, is among the most urgent problems in the theory and practice of Soviet librarianship. Its urgency stems from a number of circumstances.

First of all, the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR, after forty-five years of operation as the national library of the Soviet Union, has grown to be the country's greatest library as well as one of the largest libraries in the world.

In 1969, its stock consisted of more than 25.5 million physical vqlumes, growing at a rate of 700,000 volumes per annum. The library has 22 reading rooms with a total seating capacity of 2570. It will accomodate up to 10,000 readers daily. The library maintains interlibrary loan relations with 5000 Soviet and 270 foreign libraries which receive from it 270,000 publications every year. The reference service provides 130,000 written and verbal bibliographic references per annum. Some 200 publications to a total volume of 1000 quires go off the press every year. Further quantitative growth of the library's activities may threaten the quality of its service to readers, because the library tends to become an unwieldy, unmanageable organism.

Secondly, in contrast to many other national libraries, the function of methodological guidance of the country's libraries has emerged as a prominent feature of the Lenin Library's activities.

By virtue of this function it is closely linked with all other libraries, and the qualitative level and general trend of its own work are brought to bear on their operations more effectively.

Thirdly, thanks to the national policy of Soviet State which is aimed at the comprehensive development of its constituent national cultures, every Union republic now has a national library of its own. All of them rank with major national libraries of other countries, and even considerably surpass them in many respects, such as readership, circulation etc. Thus, according to the 1969 data, twelve of these libraries have holdings exceeding two million physical volumes (among them three - the Byelorussian, Georgian and Armenian national libraries - hold more than four million volumes); annual attendance varies from 120,000 to 580,000 persons , and circulation of books, from 525,000 to 2,240,000 in each library. Like the Lenin Library on a country-wide plane, these libraries act as methodological centres for libraries in their respective Union republics and exert great influence on the general level of library service.

A national library being essentially a research library, its development is inherently connected with the development of science. The reason is that scientific progress always rests on previous achievements of human intellect, recorded in the literature of science which accumulates in libraries.

A characteristic feature of contemporary science is the constantly growing integration of its individual parts, which in turn leads to their further differentiation.

The integration and differentiation processes directly affect printed publications - and hence the make-up of library collections - and the nature of readers' interest in special literature.

Differentiation results, in particular, in the growth of literature on highly specialised topics which extremely complicates acquisition of foreign books for the national library as a universal library: catching the necessary books and journals in the tremendous flow of specialised publications becomes an increasingly difficult task.

Integration stimulates the growth of materials in adjacent and synthetic sciences. Their selection presents as many or even more difficulties for the library. Integration of sciences manifests itself also in the specialisation profile of today's scientist. Along with being a subject specialist, he is obliged to be knowledgeable, if only superficially, about the essentials of other sciences. An interesting fact: so great is the "hybridisation" of specialists that, paradoxically, predictions can be heard that the 21st century will be a century of new renaissance when universal scientists will take place of narrow specialists.

Indeed, scientific readers are known to display ever more interest for publications in related, or even seemingly distant, branches of science. This is evidenced by reader and user needs studies which become a standard practice in libraries of many countries. To cite British data, satisfying readers' requests for literature in their immediate speciality makes up a mere half of the overall volume of services provided by research libraries, the rest of the requests falling on adjacent areas of knowledge. Findings of the analytical study being conducted in this country under the direction of the M.Ye.Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library indicate that up to 50

per cent of readers take interest in literature on fringe subjects and that these subjects make up more than 30 per cent of the total volume of requests.

It is quite evident that requests for literature in particular fields of knowledge can be most fully met by an appropriate special library, while adjacent topics and complex problems are much better represented in the collections of a universal library.

Thus, differentiation and integration of sciences, specialisation and "hybridisation" of the contemporary research worker accord with the two basic types of research libraries, namely special and universal libraries. Neither is capable of singly providing quality service to the present-day science. Hence the inevitable conclusion: satisfaction of the needs of the contemporary reader-a research scientist or specialist - is possible only through the concerted and complementary effort of both types of libraries. In other words, science itself dictates the necessity of a system of coordinated libraries.

The role of the national library assumes a special significance in this context. The thing is, coordination and cooperation of libraries require a degree of centralisation. On a nationwide scale, the one library which is best equipped to perform such centralised functions will be most certainly the national library, which has the richest collections and reference apparatus, adequate financial support and trained staff.

Therefore, when trying to outline prospects for development of a national library against the background of scientific

progress, and defining its tasks in serving the scientific, industrial and artistic communities the national library, with all its uniqueness, should be viewed not separately but in organic interrelationship with other libraries of the country, within their general framework.

The systems approach of this kind seems to offer new insights into aspects of the present state and further development of national libraries. Such an attempt was made in the USSR. The systems approach manifested itself in the fact that the national library was considered, on the one hand, as a single system, and on the other, as an integral part of a more complex system, namely the general system of libraries in the Soviet Union.

Consideration of a national library as a systems object implies that its typological functions are correlated and interdependent. Proceeding from a comparative analysis of the functions of modern national libraries and basing ourselves on the experience of the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR, we suggest the following categorisation of typological functions:

(1) a state repository of publications; (2) a major public library in the country; (3) an information and bibliographic centre; (4) a methodological guidance centre; (5) a coordinating centre.

These five functions determine not only the nature and scope of collections, but also the pattern of their use, as well as the role of the national library in the organisation of library service within a country. The essence of the organic unity of the above functions lies in the fact that a change in

one will necessarily bring about a corresponding transformation in another, with the ultimate result that the national library changes as a type. This is revealed most clearly in the activities of the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR. However, striving for a unity of typological characteristics can be observed in national libraries of other countries as well.

In viewing the national library as a subsystem of a nation's general system of libraries we took cognizance of the fact that the national policy of Soviet State, aimed at the overall development of the national cultures of its constituent nations, has resulted in the emergence of a system of national libraries. It includes the Lenin Library as the all-Union national library, the M.Ye. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (which discharges some functions of all-Union significance and in several respects acts as the national library of the Russian Federation), and the state (national) libraries of the Union republics. Apart from this, there is a marked tendency towards major special research libraries becoming national; this is particularly true of the State Public Library for Science and Technology of the USSR, the Central Scientific Agricultural, and the State Central Scientific Medical Library. We feel that the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR ought to form an actual (but not administrative) entity with these libraries in the future.

Early in 1970, the Lenin Library worked out a Programme of development for the next 10 to 15 years in which it outlined its main lines of activities and approaches to the problems that confront it as the largest universal library in the system of research libraries of the Soviet Union, in keeping with the general trends and demands of contemporary science. The main stipulations of this Programme will be discussed below.

II

The primary and most important task of a national library is the accumulation and storage of all publications originating within its country. The publication explosion has made it a difficult task, especially in countries having a highly developed publishing industry. In the recent years, an increasing number of national libraries have come against problems in acquisition of domestic literature as well.

Now, we are already faced with the necessity of limiting the number of legal deposit copies. For this reason some national libraries, e.g. the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR, the Library of Congress in the United States and some others, have had to forsake acquisition of specific kinds of publications, primarily ephemeral literature.

Along with this, there is a trend towards expanding acquisition of novel types of material: dissertations, research and technical reports, microforms, gramophone records, etc. These and similar new forms of knowledge recording are gaining in importance, and the national library cannot ignore them. The traditional definition of the object of its acquisitions as "published work" is becoming obsolete, and a new criterion will have soon to be devised, probably based not on the physical form but the substance of the knowledge transmission medium.

This prospect is fraught with formidable difficulties which can be overcome only by introducing considerable changes in the existing procedures. It seems that with the quantitative growth of printed publications and other media of knowledge recording, national libraries will have gradually to abandon not only the transitory value material but also some of the less

demanded material mainly of regional or proprietary interest (due to linguistic barriers, too narrow subject matter, etc.), and to turn over the function of their storing to some other libraries. The Lenin Library, for instance, foresees such a possibility for itself primarily as regards special kinds of technical literature. A similar spproach is conceivable in respect of printed music and other forms of musical records, etc.

But all this assumes, in our opinion, that the following conditions are strictly observed.

In the first place, decentralisation of the national library stock is in no case to apply to its central core and to interfere with its integrity. The material that is subject to withdrawal should be either the less demanded or less important publications, or again those which form a fairly autonomous structural unit of the stock, such as patents.In the second place, decentralisation is not to encroach upon the thematic universality of the national library holdings. In the third place, it is necessary to provide for the complete acquisition and careful storage of that part of the stock which goes away. In the fourth place, it is the duty of the national library to have exhaustive information about the make-up and growth of its "branch" collection. In the fifth place, the "branch"collection should be generally accessible both for use on the spot and for interlibrary loan, for copying, etc.

However, will not such a decentralisation infringe upon the traditional character of the national library, involving as it does one of its basic functions? We feel that this is not to happen if the proposed modification in acquistions

work brings about further enhancement of its information function. The traditional unique significance of a national library consisted primarily in the comprehensiveness of its domestic book collection. A partial decentralisation should impart greater prominence to its reference apparatus as the source of exhaustive summary information about all domestic book collections.

III

The situation is even more complex as regards foreign publications, while their acquisition and storage constitute the second most important function of a national library.

Indeed, from their very inception national libraries endeavoured to purchase as fully as possible the best foreign publications. As the world's publishing grew in volume so did their difficulties in selecting such materials.

It was under these circumstances that the idea of coordination of acquisition was born and quickly took root; specifically, it received unanimous approval at the Vienna symposium of European national libraries. The majority of libraries have taken the course of confining their foreign acquisitions to specific areas of knowledge, in other words, have adopted subject specialisation of their holdings, complemented by coordination by languages (mainly rare ones) and by place of origin - countries and geographic zones. It is exactly on this principle of division of responsibility by subject that the majority of foreign book acquisition schemes, headed by national libraries, are built. A considerable number of national libraries give preference to the social sciences over the natural and technical sciences because special library networks for social disciplines are generally much less

advanced than those for the science and technology field.

At first sight, the concept of subject specialisation of the foreign book collection of a national library looks very attractive, as it simplifies book selection and provides a base for coordinated acquisitions. Today, however, realisation is growing that subject specialisation runs counter to the integration process in modern science and the "hybridisation" of the scientist's interests as it undermines the roots of the universality of the national library and therefore hampers the development of a unified system of library service to science which requires, as has been shown above, special as well as universal libraries.

No doubt, abandoning specialisation complicates formulation of the acquisition policy and the coordinated sharing of responsibilities. Such a policy can be worked out only through a deep comparative analysis of the world publication scene and the library and bibliographic needs of the reader, taking into consideration the present state of the collections in the national library of every country. This is among the most important complexes for further research.

Some general stipulations, however, can be formulated even at this stage. Thus, it is known that Bulgaria's national library has isolated three groups of publications which are to occupy a principal position in its stock; these are bibliographic reference and information publications, scientific periodicals, and fundamental scientific works.

The Lenin Library holds it as its standing duty to ensure complete acquistion of such categories of foreign materials as

bibliographic reference publications; Sovetica and Rossica materials; official foreign publications; international organisation materials; international conference proceedings and scientific expedition reports; transactions, surveys, reports and papers of leading research institutions and learned societies; and published source materials, including original works of classics of science, culture and literature. The Lenin Library being an information centre for book science and library science, special attention will be paid also to literature in this field. The rest will by acquired selectively, in coordination with other libraries.

Coordination of foreign book acquisition, just as decentralisation of domestic book acquisition, presuppose serious enhancing of the role of the national library as an information centre. In assuming leadership in coordinated acquisition schemes national libraries take upon themselves the task of advising the participating libraries of all new materials coming to their respective stocks accoring to plan.

IV

Thus, one of the most characteristic tendencies in the work of the contemporary national library, conditioned by the trends in the development of modern science - namely its conversion into the centre of a unified system of a country's special libraries - has a significant bearing on its information retrieval systems.

Whereas formerly interpretation of its book collections through catalogues used to be the main task of the national library as regards information services, ever since the second quarter of this century coordinated acquisitions and interlibrary loan have been instrumental in augmenting the role of na-

tional union catalogues, which make the libraries' information retrieval system a key to the library resources of a nation. At present this aspect of a national library's work assumes special significance, as a national union catalogue is essential for establishing and maintaining a rational unified system of library service for science and industry.

The last two decades brought important innovations as regards the national library's information and bibliographic activities. In keeping with the general evolution of the coordinative functions of the national library it is transforming into a coordinating centre of the unified system of information and bibliographic services provided by the country's libraries.

This new development had its origins in 1952 when the national library of Poland undertook coordination of the activities of the country's information and bibliographic institutions, both universal and specialised, and began to issue an index of major bibliographic lists compiled by libraries and research institutions.

Since 1957, similar work has been carried out by the V.I.Lenin State Library of the USSR, and by now national libraries in many other countries have followed suit.

The year 1962 saw the beginning of another new line of activity of the national library in the information field, when the Library of Congress set up a national referral centre for science and technology with the objective of directing information users to potential information sources, i.e. libraries, information centres, research institutions and individuals.

Grasping the import of these new developments the V.I. Lenin State Library has recently set about forming a special reference and coordinating centre within its framework. Its functions are a blending of the two foregoing lines of the national library's work, viz. coordination of reference service and provision of information on all necessary sources.

The Centre will maintain the following: reference and address card files for libraries, bibliographic institutions and information agencies; union catalogues of bibliographic reference publications; union catalogues of unpublished bibliographic indexes compiled by libraries in the country; and union catalogues of scheduled bibliographic projects.

Working jointly with the reference and coordinating centres being established in the state libraries of Union republics and in central special libraries, the Centre will form a sort of core of a unified system of information and bibliographic services, and the Lenin Library will thus be enabled to actively influence the organisation of bibliographic information within the country by (a) regulating the flows of information user requests and directing them to those libraries and bibliographic institutions where they can be satisfied most completely, skilfully and promptly, and (b) promoting rational sharing of responsibilities among libraries in the preparation of current and retrospective bibliographic sources.

V

The present stage of science development is distinguished by accelerated growth rates and reduced time of assimilation

of scientific achievements. In these conditions the national library is required to pay increased attention to its services, to make them as expedient as possible, to perfect the techniques and procedures with a view to maximum utilisation of the stock, and prompt and full bibliographic and library information.

We deem it necessary, in the first place, to clearly define the peculiarities of the service provided to the readers by the national library as distinct from the peculiarities, tasks and objectives of other libraries. An important thing here is that the reader should be made conscious of these peculiarities so as to know on what occasion to refer to what library. If this is not done there will be lost time and complaints of poor service will be certain to follow.

The decisive factor here is the character of information retrieval systems, which were discussed above, and the reading room layout. In modern national libraries reading rooms are designed on the basis of differentiation (depending on the readers' background) and specialisation.

Specialisation in service takes three forms: by publication type, by languages, and by field of knowledge.

Specialisation by publication type and languages has long been standard library practice: newspaper, manuscript, Orientalia reading rooms, etc. Beginning from the thirties, first in the Soviet Union and the United States, and later in some other countries as well, subject specialisation of reading rooms has developed. The later is undoubtedly a progressive form of service, as it ensures better access to separate parts

of the stock, reduces issue time and adds to the professionalism of the librarian who is now attached to publications in specific areas of knowledge. The concept of subject specialisation in service, including reading rooms, was approved at the Vienna symposium.

In working out plans for the evolution of the Lenin Library we were faced by the questions of the degree of correspondence of our existing system of reading rooms to modern requirements, and of the course to be taken in the future. We were guided by the following considerations.

Firstly, a national library is a universal library. The value of its stock lies in its ability to most fully reflect the pattern of interrelationships and mutual penetration of individual branches of science, and in providing for readers studying complex problems.

Secondly, a national library is a nation's richest book collection into which an immense current of new scientific and technological information recorded in books and periodicals is flown continuously. A national library must guarantee full and prompt access to this information.

Thirdly, a national library is not merely the largest book repository of a country but also a major information and bibliographic centre destined to articulate the multifarious and numerous sources of information that exist in the country into a unified system and to make them accessible to the reader.

Proceeding from the above, we came to the conclusion that the system of reading rooms in our library should continue to base itselt on combining the principles of subject specialisation and differentiation by kind and type of publications.

However, the relative significance of some of the reading rooms should undergo substantial changes within this system.

An organisation of subject reading rooms that seems to be most expedient is by three large complexes: the social sciences (humanities), the natural sciences, and the technical sciences. It is only through such broad complexes of scientific disciplines that library service can hope to adequately represent the pattern of unity of scientific knowledge, integration of sciences, and to avoid duplication of the subject profiles of reading rooms in subject (special) libraries.

Subject reading rooms should be complemented with reading rooms differentiated by publication types and kinds. Particular importance is attached to three of them: recent acquisitions, current periodical, and reference and information reading rooms. It is our belief that these are the key reading rooms in a national library and that they must carry a much larger share of service than they do today.

We have realigned these reading rooms, materially increasing their seating capacity and using open access on a broad scale. Thus, the new acquisitions reading room has on display a week's additions to the stock which include both current and recently purchased out of print publications in all languages and fields of knowledge, to be forwarded to the main storage and the specialised collections of the library. The displays comprise about 2,000 titles per week now, as against 1,000 titles prior to realignment. The average day's attendance is 700 persons, reaching the 1,000 mark on some days, whereas formerly it never exceeded 300.

In the reference and information reading room, reading accomodations have grown from 30 to 70 seats, and the number of titles of bibliographic serials kept on open access which used to be 500 has been increased to 950.

VI

Interlibrary loan holds a position of prominence in the national library's service to science and industry. It helps to overcome territorial barriers in the utilisation of library holdings, and the reading rooms are relieved of the sometimes excessive burden they have to shoulder. Interlibrary loan is growing in importance because of a new approach to the acquisition in national libraries - viz. coordination of acquisition with other libraries in a country, - coordinated acquistions losing any sense if not backed by cooperation in the use of library resources.

Central to the development of interlibrary loan service of national libraries is the problem of what they can and should lend, and what should be the restrictions, if any, on the publications that they lend.

There are considerable variations from one country to another in the practice of participation of national libraries in interlibrary loan. However, an increasing number of these are beginning to concentrate their interlibrary loan service on those materials which are not held by other libraries, putting restrictions on the lending of other books and periodicals.

This is the approach adopted in the Soviet Union, where the Minister of Culture of the USSR approved,in April 1969, a new "Statute of the Unified State-Wide System of Interlibrary

Loan in the USSR", which specifies that book requests sent to the Lenin Library are subject to previous checking in those libraries which are specialised or regional universal centres of the interlibrary loan system.

However, such a solution is fraught with serious trouble. For one thing, it runs counter to the functions of the national library as an archive of printed publications, because materials leaving it inevitably run the risk of being lost or damaged. Besides, issuing literature on interlibrary loan infringes upon the interests of reading room users. Utmost development of reproduction techniques seems to offer the only way of overcoming this contradiction.

At the moment the Lenin Library, as most of the other national libraries, operates three kinds of literature service: the reading room service, the interlibrary loan service, and the reproduction of library materials in photocopy and microcopy form. The first of these services holds the leading position in the total operations, while the third one is still in its infancy. The Lenin Library intends to change this correlation in the future. Reading room and interlibrary loan services ought to stabilise as they cannot grow indefinitely without affecting quality. We shall encourage in every possible way the development of document reproduction as the most speedy procedure which is available to any individual even if he (or she) is unable to visit the library or obtain books by interlibrary loan. With this aim in view a special duplicating centre will be formed at the Lenin Library in the nearest future that will provide for uninterrupted, prompt and unrestricted copying of its holdings.

VII

Evolution of a national library towards leadership in a unified country-wide library system requires that its methodological guidance function should be magnified. This view is corroborated by experiences of several countries. Methodological guidance of other libraries is one of the youngest typological functions of the national library; it originated in the Soviet Union and is a key factor in defining the Lenin Library as a new type of national library.

The Lenin Library's function as a centre for methodological guidance of the country's libraries is carried out along three main lines:

(1) the coordination and cooperation of the activities of regional and specialised guidance centres;

(2) the study and generalisation of the experiences of Soviet libraries and encouragement of inculcation of the most advanced practices;

(3) the development of recommendatory bibliography and assistance in its use as a form of methodological guidance of libraries.

While we regard methodological work of the national library as an essential condition for progress in librarianship, we also believe that it cannot be adequate without a firm scientific foundation.

An important characteristic of the present stage of the development of science is its growing transformation into a productive force. This is equally true of both the material and spiritual facets of the life of a community and therefore applies to librarianship as well.

However, at the moment library theory lags far behind library practice and does not provide a sufficiently firm theoretical foundation for its further development.

With the science progress dictating the necessity of enhancing the role of the national library in the overall system of library service, a major prerequisite for fulfilling this task is boosting of the national library work and upgrading of library theory. It seems, however, that until quite recently national libraries had not paid enough attention to this aspect of their activities. Taking cognizance of this fact, a new subdivision was formed within the Lenin Library structure, called Research Department of Library Science and Bibliographic Theory. First of all, it conducts research employing its own staff; secondly, it coordinates research work in other libraries of the country, primarily universal libraries; thirdly, it provides necessary information to theoreticians and practical librarians.

The establishment of a special research division does not mean, though, that all research in librarianship has been concentrated there. On the contrary, we contemplate encouraging such activities in all departments of the Lenin Library. The following principal directions will be pursued:

(1) General problems of library and bibliographic theory and history, history of the book; interrelationships and integration of library science and other parts of science; scientific terminology of librarianship; library classification; library history against the background of the overall history of science and culture; forecasting of librarianship.

(2) Development of the Lenin Library as national library and its collections: elaboration of the principles of selection of domestic and foreign publications, programs for input of library materials into computer, optimal system of catalogues, analysis of utilisation of the library stock by the readers, etc.

(3) The book and reading in the life of the contemporary society: a research study into the role of the book and reading in the life of a small Soviet town is nearing completion, and preparations are under way for a study of the role of the book and reading in the life of the present-day Soviet village community.

(4) The library service system in the country: guidelines and optimal conditions for the development of a library network, depository storage of library materials.

(5) Development and practical application in the Lenin Library and other Soviet libraries of the most up-to-date means of automation and mechanisation, including computer technology.

(6) Preservation of library collections.

Progress in any field of science is largely dependent on the degree of its organisation, management and planning. Being a coordinating centre for research activities in the field of library science and bibliography, the Lenin Library has adopted summary long-term plans, reflecting the research activities of universal research libraries and special chairs, as the main method of coordination. We have drawn such a plan for the years 1968-1970. Preparations are in progress for working out a similar plan for the years 1971-1975. Summary planning makes it

possible to obtain the most complete picture of the trends in current research, to identify shortcomings in their topics, and to focus scientific resources on key problems.

One of the basic regularities in the development of science is its continuity and international character. Therefore, provision of research workers with information about the plans, progress and achievements of their colleagues and specialists in adjacent fields is essential for its progress.

Information services for library science in this country (as, it seems, in other countries) are sadly lacking both in quantity and in currency. Because of this, an information and bibliographic centre for library science and bibliographic theory has been set up at the Lenin Library early this year. Its functions are provision of library specialists with abstracts, translations, bibliographic and factual references on the basis of a specialised collection of printed and proprietary materials and a multi-aspect reference apparatus. The centre maintains broad cooperation and contacts with the similar centres at the All-Union State Library of Foreign Literature and the State Public Library for Science and Technology of the USSR.

VIII

Summing up, we come to the conclusion that the main line of future development of national libraries, determined by the progress of science, consists in the utmost strengthening of their links with other research libraries in their respective countries, in pooling their efforts to solve all major problems of library and bibliographic service, in enhancing their central and coordinating role. This tendency should eventually lead to

the development of an optimal system of library service to science and industry in the country.

Thus "feedback" between the process of science development and the national library is established. Born by human thought, the national library is spurred by its progress as well as itself is of vital importance to it.

In our opinion, the principal directions of optimising the library service system headed by the national library should be: maximum speeding up of all library and bibliographic procedures, upgrading of their quality, and raising of their economic efficiency. Apparently this goal can be reached only through rationalisation, unification and standardisation of library and bibliographic procedures; perfection and modernisation of library and bibliographic service techniques; widespread adoption of automation and mechanisation; development and strengthening of the theoretical bases of library work; improvement of professional skills of library personnel.

Elaboration of prospects for the development of national libraries within the context of science progress offers a vast field for cooperation among national libraries of all countries. Pooling their efforts may have a profound effect on the time and quality of solving the above-mentioned tasks. In this sense, the activities of the IFLA Section of National Libraries seem to be particularly promising.